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IGNITION AND COMBUSTION PHENOMENA IN DIESEL ENGINES

By F. Sass

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TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM NO. 482.

IGNITION AND COMBUSTION PHENOMENA IN DIESEL ENGINES.*

By F. Sass

Evidences were found that neither gasification nor vaporization of the injected fuel occurs before ignition; also that the hydrogen coefficient has no significance. However, the knowledge of the ignition point and of the "time lag" is important. After ignition, the combustion proceeds in a series of reactions, the last of which at least are now known.

It is remarkable that the Diesel engine has existed some thirty years and has been brought to such a high degree of technical perfection, without even an approximately correct explanation of what occurs in the combustion space. We were convinced that the fuel (gas oil or tar oil), after its introduction into the combustion space, had to go through a peculiar transformation before igniting. It was thought that all the fuel particles, which are still liquid at the time of injection, must be converted into the gaseous form before ignition and that no ignition and combustion was possible before the complete gas-

*"Neuere Anschauungen über Zünd- und Verbrennungsvorgänge in Dieselmotoren." Zeitschrift des Vereines deutscher Ingenieure, September 10, 1927, pp. 1287-1292.

ification of every individual drop. Diesel himself held this opinion.* In 1912 he mentioned, as the second of his "fundamental ideas" the "gradual introduction of finely divided fuel under combustion of the same in this highly heated and compressed air under simultaneous action on the outgoing piston" and then continued:

"Since a fuel can burn only after it has been gasified, the immediate result of this second fundamental principle for all nongaseous fuels is the gradual gasification of the fuel in the working cylinder, sometimes only in very small quantities for each stroke of the piston, with the extraction of the heat of gasification from the working process itself; in other words, the development of the process of gasification into a part of the working process in the working cylinder."

Also in many other places, Diesel spoke of the necessary gasification of the fuel. In his book (Berlin, 1913, p. 150), he mentioned, as one of the "fundamental laws of Diesel-engine construction," the "injection of the fuel with highly compressed, but cooled and purified air, not only for the production of an intimate mixture, but also especially for the sake of the gasification resulting from the fact that numerous fuel particles in the whole mass of the combustion air first gasify and then ignite and thus produce the necessary heat for the gasification

*"Die Entstehung des Dieselmotors," Jahrbuch der Schiffbautechnischen Gesellschaft, Vol. 14 (1913), p. 262.

of the rest of the fuel, for which the heat of compression alone is insufficient."

It is not certain as to whether this was Diesel's opinion from the first, or whether he was influenced by P. Rieppel's article, which was published in 1907-8.* Rieppel was the first who sought a scientific explanation of the fact that aliphatic gas oils and aromatic coal-tar oils behave quite differently in the Diesel engine. On the basis of observations of a running engine, using gas oils and coal-tar oils and mixtures of the two, and on the basis of experiments with "bombs," he expected to find the explanation in the fact that the usable fuels form oil gases with the addition of only a little heat, while the more difficultly combustible oils require more heat or a longer time for the formation of the oil gases.

According to Rieppel, the hydrogen coefficient of the fuel, i.e., the molecular ratio of hydrogen to carbon, is of decisive importance, because hydrogen is given off by the usable oils at a relatively low temperature and, due to its low ignition point, which Rieppel put too low at 500°C (932°F), starts the self-ignition of the other molecules. Aufhäuser also accepted this valuation of fuels according to the hydrogen coefficient,** and soon afterwards the opinion became general that the liquid fuel in the combustion space must be converted into the gaseous form

*Versuche über die Verwendung von Teerölen zum Betrieb des Dieselmotors, Forschungsarbeiten, No. 55, Berlin, 1908. See also V.D.I., Vol. 51 (1907), p. 613.

**Die Triebmittel des Dieselmotors mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Seeschifffahrt, Jahrbuch der Schiffbautechnischen Gesellschaft, Vol. 14 (1913), p. 368.

before ignition could occur. It is strange that no one seems to have raised the question as to the possibility of the complete conversion of the fuel into the gaseous form in the extremely short interval between injection and ignition, which is generally only a few thousandths of a second.

The Experiments of Wollers and Ehmcke

Even now we are far from the full explanation of the ignition and combustion phenomena. If the right beginning has been made, this is due chiefly to the researches of Wollers and Ehmcke,* which were undertaken at the suggestion of the late Dr. Alt, in order to investigate the possibility of using coal-tar oils in Diesel engines. These researches furnished convincing evidence against the possibility of the formation of oil gas in the engine, which has subsequently been confirmed by further observations of engines in operation.

Wollers and Ehmcke investigated four fuels characterized by their different behavior in Diesel engines, namely, light natural-tar oil, paraffin oil, vertical-furnace tar and coal-tar oil, in an electrically heated bomb, and analyzed the gaseous mixtures obtained at four different pressures. It was found that the experimentally found dependence of the vapor pressures on the temperature (Fig. 1), and on the time required for vaporization

*"Der Vergasungsvorgang der Treibmittel, die Oelgasbildung und das Verhalten der Oeldämpfe bei der Verbrennung im Dieselmotor," Kruppsche Monatshefte, Vol. II (1921), p. 1. (See also N.A.C.A. T.M. No. 281 - "Combustion of Liquid Fuels in Diesel Engine." By Otto Alt.)

(Fig. 2) did not differ so much as one would be led to suppose by the behavior of the fuels in a Diesel engine. In Figure 1, for example, the curve of the easily burning paraffin oil nearly coincides with the curve of the difficultly burning vertical-furnace tar and lies halfway between the curves of the light natural-tar oil, generally unsuitable for Diesel engines, and the curve of coal-tar oil. Figure 2 conforms just as poorly with the law, for the curve of the easily usable paraffin oil lies between the light natural-gas oil and coal-tar oil.

In a subsequent series of experiments, the oil vapors were condensed by suddenly cooling the bomb, and the relative spaces occupied by the oil vapors and oil gases were determined by measuring the partial pressure of the remaining oil gases. Here also the results (Table I) disagreed with the previous general opinion that gasification of the fuel was essential to ignition. The difficultly combustible oils, namely, coal-tar oil and vertical-furnace tar, gave for like pressures, a substantially greater oil-gas output than the aliphatic paraffin oil (e.g., 93% and 86% against 69% with paraffin oil), and it was only for the aromatic light oil from natural tar that the gaseous portion of the mixture of gas and vapor was relatively small (54%). The result of the gas analyses was surprising, that the aromatic coal-tar oil furnishes an abundant output of hydrogen, while the aliphatic paraffin oil was quite inferior in this respect. This is the exact opposite of the previous conclusions from the be-

havior of fuels in the Diesel cylinder.

TABLE I.

Separation of fuel oils into gas and vapor according to
Wollers and Ehmcke

		Light oil from natural tar			Paraffin oil		
Saturation pressure	atm.	40	27.5	13	42	35	28
Saturation temperature	°C	419	418	369	459	455	441
Vapor-gas mixture	Gas %	54	19	8	69	56	54
	Vapor %	46	81	92	31	44	46

	Coal-tar oil			Vertical-furnace tar			
Saturation pressure atm.	40	34	28	41	28	13	
Saturation temperature °C	495	494	474	464	445	413	
Vapor-gas mixture {	Gas %	93	84	75	86	75	12
	Vapor %	7	16	25	14	25	88

The falsity of the former view is still more convincingly demonstrated by the results of the ignition tests with the oil gases from the four fuels and then with the liquid fuels themselves. The ignition points of the oil gases were determined in the Dixon furnace, while the ignition points of the liquid fuels were determined with Moore's ignition-point tester, both times in an oxygen stream (Table II). The ignition points of the oil gases are surprisingly higher than those of the liquid

fuels. Moreover, the ignition temperatures of the oil gases generated in the bomb are all practically alike and show none of the differences exhibited in the Diesel engine. On the contrary, the ignition points of the liquid fuels, arranged according to their magnitude, correspond exactly to their combustibility in the engine.

TABLE II.

Ignition points of oil gases and liquid fuels according to Wollers and Ehmcke

	Ignition points in oxygen stream at 1 atm.	
	Oil gases	Liquid fuels
Paraffin oil	614-655°C (1137-1211°F)	240°C (464°F)
Light natural-tar oil	615-651°C (1139-1204°F)	326°C (619°F)
Coal-tar oil	645°C (1193°F)	445°C (833°F)
Vertical-furnace tar	635-661°C (1175-1222°F)	468°C (874°F)

The practical equality of the ignition temperatures of the oil gases regardless of their source is explained, according to the gas analyses of Wollers and Ehmcke, by the fact that oil-gas mixtures all have the same constituents and differ only in the proportions of these constituents. Therefore, it is extremely improbable that, for the ignition of the easily ignitable fuels, the roundabout way through the much more difficultly ignitable oil gases is necessary.

Measuring the Ignition Temperature in the Engine

Further proof that no gasification of the fuel can take place in the combustion space before the ignition, is furnished by the measurement of the ignition temperatures in the hot-bulb engine, in which the ignition must naturally take place just the same as in a Diesel engine. The hot-bulb engine is particularly well suited for such observations, because the wall temperature of a portion of the combustion space (namely, of the hot bulb) can be directly measured. The temperatures of the hot bulb given in Table III were measured in a 30 HP. A.E.G. medium-pressure engine of a new type at 15-16 atm. compression pressure and ignition by means of a small hot bulb *a*. (Fig. 3), which was heated by starting with a "cartridge." The hot bulb was drilled at the points 1-3 close to the inner surface, and a platinum-platinum-rhodium thermo-electric couple introduced into each hole, which had a diameter of 5 mm (0.197 in.). Holes 1 and 2 were filled with melted tin for better heat conduction. Hole 2 is near the center of the fuel jet of about 30° , while holes 1 and 3 lie nearer its rim. The accuracy of the thermo-electric couple, after calibration, was about $\pm 1\%$.

TABLE III.

Temperatures of hot bulb of 30 HP. A.E.G.
medium-pressure engine under various loads

Time	R.P.M.	L o a d k W	Temp. of hot bulb			Temp. of exhaust
			Hole 1	Hole 2	Hole 3	
9.30-11.00	400	20.1 = 1/1	365°C	395°C	350°C	281°C
11.05-11.30	405	14.9 = 3/4	290°C	315°C	270°C	211°C
11.35-12.10	410	10.5 = 1/2	320°C	360°C	300°C	177°C
12.15-12.45	415	5.2 = 1/4	440°C	490°C	460°C	159°C
12.50- 1.20	420	Idling speed	400°C	460°C	430°C	125°C
1.25- 2.00	275	Low idling speed	420°C	450°C	415°C	109°C

The lowest temperatures of the hot bulb were obtained at 3/4 load corresponding to the injection period which varied with the load. They were only 270-315°C (518-599°F) and were therefore more than 100°C (180°F) below the ignition temperature of acetylene which, according to Table IV, has, with 416-440°C (780.8-824°F) the lowest ignition point of all the constituents of the oil-gas mixture. If, therefore, the gasification of the fuel before combustion were indispensable, no ignition could occur in this engine from full load to about 1/4 load, because the temperature of the ignition source in this load range is below the lowest ignition temperature of the oil-gas constituents. In reality, however, the ignitions are uniform and sure at all loads.

TABLE IV.

Ignition temperatures of the constituents of an oil-gas mixture according to Wollers and Ehmcke

	In oxygen at 1 atm.	
Hydrogen H_2	580-590°C	(1076-1094°F)
Methane $C H_4$	556-700°C	(1033-1292°F)
Ethane $C_2 H_6$	520-630°C	(968-1166°F)
Propane $C_3 H_8$	490-570°C	(914-1058°F)
Ethylene $C_2 H_4$	500-519°C	(932- 966°F)
Acetylene $C_2 H_2$	416-440°C	(781- 824°F)
Carbon monoxide CO	637-658°C	(1179-1216°F)

Vaporization before Ignition

The often contested question as to whether vaporization of the injected fuel is necessary before ignition can take place, has likewise been clarified by recent researches. Alt* rightly calls attention to the fact that the mean boiling points of many difficultly combustible aromatic fuel oils are lower than the corresponding temperatures of gas oil and paraffin oil, and that, on the other hand, the mean boiling points of the aliphatic fuel oils are higher than their ignition points. From this fact Alt concludes that vaporization cannot be especially important for ignition, since otherwise the higher the ignition point above the boiling point, the more favorable it would be for the ignition.

*"Flussige Brennstoffe und ihre Verbrennung in der Dieselmachine," V.D.I., Vol. 67 (1923), p. 586, and the special number "Dieselmaschinen," 1923. (For translation, see N.A.C.A. Technical Memorandum No. 281).

Neumann* has recently investigated the vaporization process mathematically and found that, due to lack of time, no appreciable vaporization of the fuel drops can occur before ignition (Fig. 4). Only the time lag is available for the vaporization, i.e., the time between the beginning of the injection and the beginning of the combustion. This interval is even shorter than assumed by Neumann, who calls it the interval between the beginning of the delivery stroke of the pump and the visible pressure increase in the indicator diagram. In reality, a considerable portion of this time (generally more than half) is consumed by the "injection lag," that is, the interval between the beginning of the pump stroke and the beginning of the injection, which is used for the compression of the fuel oil and the expansion of the delivery tube. According to our own measurements, the time lag is only $1/400$ to $1/300$ or, at most, $1/100$ second. In this short time, according to Figure 4, the volume of the drops can have diminished hardly 0.1%. It may therefore be said that practically no vaporization of the injected fuel occurs before ignition.

Hydrogen Coefficient

Table V gives the results of the analysis of six aliphatic fuel oils in the chemical laboratory of the A.E.G. (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft) turbine factory.** Of these the

*"Untersuchungen über die Selbstzündung flüssiger Brennstoffe," V.D.I., Vol. 70, (1926) p. 1071.

**Thus far the laboratory has chemically tested over 80 fuel samples from various sources, the majority of them in the running engine.

Mexican gas oil II has a hydrogen coefficient of $7.54 \div (84.99 \div 12) = 1.066$; South-African gas oil, $8.56 \div (86.44 \div 12) = 1.19$. Both these values are very low in comparison with the maximum of about 2, and nevertheless both these fuels are quite usable and have very good heat values. The Mexican gas oil I, on the contrary, is useless, due to its hard-asphalt content of 0.975%, notwithstanding its greater hydrogen content of 11.5% and its favorable hydrogen coefficient of 1.63. In starting the ignition, the hydrogen does not play the part which has hitherto been ascribed to it. It does not first split off and thereby introduce the ignition, of which it is incapable,* due to its high ignition temperature of 580-590°C (1076-1094°F), Table IV, but burns only after the beginning of the combustion, simultaneously with the carbon, in a roundabout way through a series of intermediate substances which characterize the combustion reactions of the fuel oil.

*In aromatic fuel oils, e.g. coal-tar oil, which give off hydrogen on being heated, the hydrogen can introduce the ignition.

TABLE V

Elementary analyses and index values of several fuel oils

Source of Oil			1 German paraffin oil	2 No. Amer- ican gas oil	3 Mexican gas oil I
Elementary analyses	{	C %	86.74	84.36	84.61
		H "	10.65	11.75	11.50
		O+N "	1.64	3.59	1.66
		S "	0.97	0.30	2.23
Ash		%	0.027	0.00	0.00
Water		"	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hard asphalt		"	0.11	0.00	0.975
Flash point		°C	77	91	67
Burning point		"	108	104	131
Solidifying point		"	3	Below -15	-5.5
Sp. G. at 20°C			0.875	0.863	0.875
Heat	Upper kcal/kg		10738	11500	10856
value	Lower "		10162	10866	10253
Viscosity	At 12°C	2.13 at 10°C	1.67	2.69	
in	" 20 "	1.68	1.41	--	
Engler	" 30 "	--	--	1.76	
degrees	" 50 "	1.23	--	1.44	

Table V (Cont.)

Elementary analyses and index values of several fuel oils

Source of Oil		4 Mexican gas oil II	5 Argentine gas oil	6 So. African gas oil
Elementary analyses	C %	84.99	84.65	86.44
	H "	7.54	13.54	8.56
	O+N "	5.02	1.63	5.00
	S "	2.45	0.18	0.00
Ash	%	0.01	Traces	0.02
Water	"	0.00	0.00	Traces
Hard asphalt	"	0.00	0.00	1.167
Flash point	°C	112	210	111
Burning point	"	141	255	133
Solidifying point	"	-5.0		Below -15
Sp. G. at 20°C		0.870	0.865	0.921
Heat	Upper kcal/kg	10919	10843	10759
value	Lower "	10512	10193	10297
Viscosity	At 12°C	1.83	45.18	13.22
in	" 20 "	--	29.25	7.03
Engler	" 30 "	1.57	16.96	4.58
degrees	" 50 "	1.44	5.46	1.95

Explanation of the Ignition According to Tausz

If neither gasification nor appreciable vaporization of the fuel occurs before the ignition, the fuel drops must ignite directly from the liquid state, for which reason they must first be heated to a certain temperature. The ignition point, which must not be confused with the flash point or burning point, is the lowest temperature at which a substance can ignite spontane-

ously. It is determined with the ignition-point tester, which is described by Harold Moore in *The Automobile Engineer* (1920, p. 200), and which has been improved by the Friedrich Krupp Company. The determination can be made either in air or oxygen at atmospheric pressure. It is more accurate to find the ignition point in compressed air at the pressure reached at the end of the compression in the Diesel engine, as did Tausz and Schulte.*

The three cases give quite different values for the ignition point (Table VI).

TABLE VI.

Ignition points of a few aliphatic fuels in air and in oxygen at 1 atm. and in compressed air, according to Tausz and Schulte

	Ignition points - atmospheric pressure		Ignition points in compressed air	
	In Air	In Oxygen		Pressure atmospheres
Gas oil	{ 336°C 637°F	{ 270°C 518°F	{ 205°C 401°F	27
Kerosene	{ 290 to 435°C 554 " 815°F	{ 250 to 265°C 482 " 509°F	{ 200°C 392°F	26
Shale oil	{ 354 " 435°C 669 " 815°F	{ 272 " 290°C 522 " 554°F	{ 200°C 392°F	23
Paraffin	{ 388 " 414°C 730 " 777°F	{ 243 " 258°C 469 " 496°F	{ 228°C 442°F	11.5

*"Ueber Zündpunkte und Verbrennungsvorgänge im Dieselmotor" Halle, 1924; V.D.I., Vol. 68, May 31, 1924, pp. 574-578. (For translation, see N.A.C.A. Technical Memorandum No. 299 - "Determination of Ignition Points of Liquid Fuels Under Pressure," by J. Tausz and F. Schulte, 1925.

The ignition point is generally lower in oxygen than in air and still lower in compressed air of the usual pressure in Diesel engines. For a few substances (such as ethyl benzene, allyl alcohol, trinitrophenol, etc.) the ignition temperature is higher in oxygen than in air. This fact caused Tausz to give an interesting explanation of the ignition, according to which the substances absorb oxygen before ignition, forming superoxides (peroxides), i.e. supersaturated oxygen compounds which are stable only in a transitory pressure and temperature range, beyond which they suddenly decompose. This decomposition produces much heat and the substance ignites.

With substances whose ignition point is higher in oxygen than in air, the superoxide, before it decomposes (i.e. ignites) can absorb more oxygen, thus forming a substance with a higher ignition point. The oxygen absorption needs to take place only in a relatively small portion of the molecules in the fuel drops, because the heat freed by the decomposition of the superoxide suffices to decompose the remaining molecules in the fuel drop, i.e., to start the combustion. Only in so far as the oxygen absorption signifies decomposition of the fuel to a very slight degree, are we justified in claiming that the injected fuel decomposes before ignition.

Ignition Points in Compressed Air

The experiments of Tausz and Schulte also showed that the ignition point is generally lowered by increased pressure for a few substances not used as engine fuel, but can also be raised to a certain degree. Mixtures behave differently from the original substances. A few of the ignition curves are shown in Figure 5. The gas oil mostly used in Diesel engines ignites, at the customary compression pressure of about 30 atm., somewhat above 200°C (392°F). Kerosene behaves similarly. The ignition point of gasoline is higher and that of benzol considerably higher. Nevertheless, both these oils burn well in Diesel engines, though the compression must be considerably higher, especially for benzol. Since these produce high stresses in the working parts and since they cost considerably more than gas oil, they do not come under consideration for Diesel engines.

Neumann expresses the opinion that it is more correct to attribute the lowering of the ignition point to the increasing density, rather than to the pressure of the air, since the fuel drops are heated by conduction, which depends on the air density. By plotting the ignition points found by Tausz and Schulte against the air density γ , Neumann obtains the curve (Fig. 6) of the absolute ignition temperatures T_s , which follows the law $T_s = C\gamma^{-m}$, in which $C \sim 709$ and $m = 0.16$ for aliphatic oils. We can follow Neumann in so far as the air density and not

the air pressure determines the ignition point. The formula for the mean ignition temperature of different fuel oils is of no practical importance, however, because the ignition points of various fuels exhibit differences which must be considered in determining the compression, although they do not appear in the formula.

Time Lag of Injection

The gas oil almost exclusively used for Diesel engines ignites, according to Tausz and Schulte, at about 200°C (392°F), with the customary compression in Diesel engines. The fuel drops injected into the combustion space must be heated to at least this temperature. It is known, however, that, in order to guarantee the starting of the engine from the cold condition, at least 27 to 28 atmospheres pressure is required for airless injection engines and about 30 atm. for air-injection engines, because of the cooling caused by the expanding injection air. If we assume 28 atm., we find (according to the gas-entropy diagram of Schuele*) 500°C (932°F), as the final temperature corresponding to an initial temperature of 27°C (80.6°F), and 550°C (1022°F) for an initial temperature of 50°C (122°F), i.e. temperatures of about $300\text{--}350^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($540\text{--}630^{\circ}\text{F}$) above the ignition point.

This is clearly shown by Figure 7. The intersection points of the ignition curve for gas oil with the curves of the com-

*"Die thermischen Eigenschaften der einfachen Gase und der technischen Feuergase zwischen 0° und 3000°C ," V.D.I., Vol. 60 (1916), p. 630.

pression pressures for 27°C (80.6°F) and 50°C (122°F) initial temperature show the same compression pressures at which the ignition point was obtained in the cold and in the hot engine. The points are surprisingly low, at only 6.1 and 7.3 atm. That the compression pressure must, nevertheless, be much greater, is due to the fact that the fuel drops require some time for heating to their ignition point. This heating must be effected, however, by the time the crank shaft has moved $3-5^{\circ}$.

The time between the beginning of the injection and the ignition is called "time lag" by C. J. Hawkes,* who first investigated this phenomenon. Figure 8 shows it for Scotch shale oil (Sp. G. 0.86) in air under 14 atm. of pressure, as plotted against the temperature. At 500°C (932°F) it is about 0.007 sec. This value seems too large, which may be due to inadequacy of the experimental apparatus. The compressibility of the oil was disregarded, and there might have been air pockets in the horizontal fuel valve. Fundamentally, the knowledge of the significance of the time lag indicates great progress since, in connection with the dependence of the ignition point on the pressure, it enables the choice of the compression.

Further measurements of the time lag would be valuable, since the location of the time point in relation to the dead center, in which the ignition occurs, determines the maximum pressure and hence the working stress, the shape of the indi-

*"Fuel Oil in Diesel Engines," Engineering, Vol. CX, Dec. 10, 1920, p. 786.

cator diagram, the combustion and the fuel consumption. The time lag cannot, however, be put equal to the time between the beginning of the fuel-pump stroke and the pressure rise in the offset indicator diagram. We must, on the contrary, subtract from this time the injection lag, which must be determined separately, as explained by Hesselman.*

Combustion of Hydrocarbons

The question as to how the injected fuel burns after ignition in the Diesel engine has not yet been fully answered. We do not know accurately the composition of the fuel oils, but only that they are very complex mixtures of ^{aliphatic} hydrocarbons, when of petroleum or lignite tar origin, predominantly of the composition $C_n H_{2n+2}$ (paraffins) and $C_n H_{2n}$ (olefins or naphthenes) in chain compounds, and of aromatic hydrocarbons for coal-tar, belonging to the naphthalene, fluorene, phenanthrene and anthracene groups of ring compounds.

Disregarding the ever-present impurities, the combustion products of both series of hydrocarbons contain CO_2 and H_2O . It is true, however, that the fuel oils, in burning, do not first separate into C and H which then simply combine with the oxygen in the compressed air. The combustion of the fuel oils consists, rather, in passing through a whole series of in-

*"Hochdruckölmotor mit Einspritzung des Brennstoffes ohne Druckluft," V.D.I., Vol. 67 (July, 1923) pp. 658-662. (For translation see N.A.C.A. T.M. No. 312 - "Hesselman Heavy-Oil High-Compression Engine," by K. J. E. Hesselman.)

intermediate compounds, which are different for the gas oils as compared with those for the aromatic hydrocarbons.

Franz Fischer* takes xylene ($C_8 H_{10}$) as an example. Its molecule, when heated, splits up into toluene, benzene, ethylene, methane, etc. Thereupon the molecule again enlarges and, with the liberation of hydrogen, forms diphenyl ($C_{12} H_{10}$). With the continued loss of hydrogen, ever-larger molecules are formed, which are finally comparable only to a great carbon skeleton.

The aliphatic gas oils, which are generally used in Diesel engines, behave differently. They decompose, on heating, into smaller molecules, especially ethylene ($C_2 H_4$). Apparently this decomposition leads through methane ($C H_4$), since all hydrocarbons show a tendency to decompose into $C H_4$ and C.** The combustion process of ethylene and methane is now well known.

In 1884 Dixon*** found that a perfectly dry mixture of carbon monoxide and oxygen could not be exploded by the electric spark, while the addition of very small quantities of water vapor caused the mixture to explode immediately.**** While Dixon

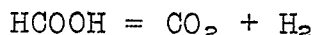
*"Die neuesten Anschauungen über die Vorgänge bei der Verbrennung und der Oxidation der Kohlen," Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Kenntnis der Kohle, Vol. IV (1920), p. 448.

** H. Von Wartenberg, "Verbrennungsvorgänge im Dieselmotor," V.D.I., Vol. 68 (1924), p. 153.

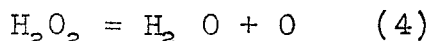
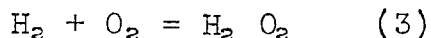
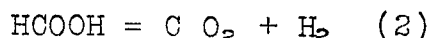
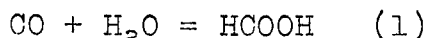
***"Conditions of Chemical Change in Gases: Hydrogen, Carbonic Oxide and Oxygen," Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc., London, Vol. 175 (1885), p. 617.

****According to Manchot (Chemiker Zeitschrift, Vol. 47, 1923, p. 781), dry carbon monoxide is not nonignitable but only difficultly ignitable.

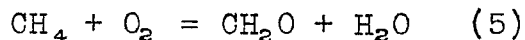
concluded that CO oxidized to CO_2 according to the formulas $\text{CO} + \text{H}_2\text{O} = \text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2$ and $2\text{H}_2 + \text{O}_2 = 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$, Wieland* demonstrated that it must also include formic acid (HCOOH):



Even this explanation of the combustion is incorrect, for Von Wartenberg and Sieg** have shown that hydrogen peroxide ($\text{H}_2 \text{O}_2$), which had previously been found in the combustion of CO, is also a necessary intermediate compound in the combustion of CO:



CO occurs again as the last term in the combustion formulas for methane and ethylene, i.e. the same substances into which the gas molecules decompose during combustion. According to Bone and Wheeler*** the combustion of methane takes place as follows:



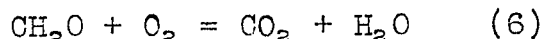
in which the formaldehyde is simultaneously oxidized, according

*"Zur Verbrennung des Kohlenoxyds," Berichte der Deutschen Chemischen Gesellschaft, Vol. 45 (1912), p. 679.

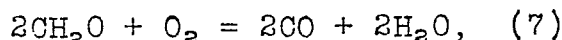
**"Ueber den Mechanismus einiger Verbrennungen," Ber. d. Deutschen Chem. Gesellschaft, Vol. 53 (1921), p. 2192.

***"The slow oxidation of methane at low temperatures," Proceedings of the Chemical Society, Vol. 19 (1903), p. 191.

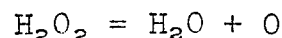
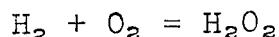
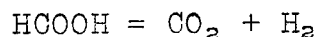
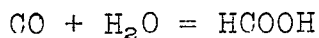
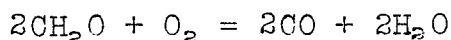
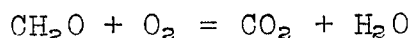
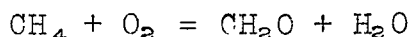
to the formulas



and

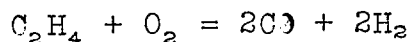


to CO_2 and CO . The latter is then further oxidized, through HCOOH , H_2 and H_2O_2 , to CO_2 and H_2O . If formulas (5) to (7) are combined with formulas (1) to (4), we find that methane must burn according to the following reactions:

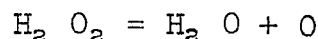
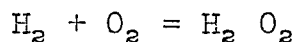
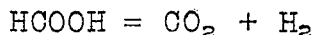
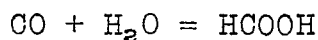
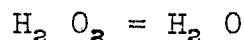
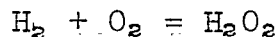
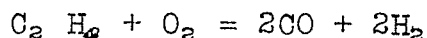


Thus there are not less than five intermediate products, namely, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide, formic acid, hydrogen and hydrogen peroxide which, however, immediately disappear so that only CO_2 and H_2O remain.

The reactions are similar for ethylene, which burns to carbon monoxide and hydrogen (Bone and Wheeler, Jour. Chem. Soc., Vol. 81, 1902, p. 535) according to the formula

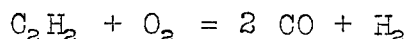


thus involving the following reactions.

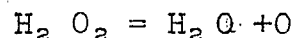
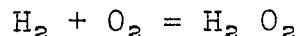
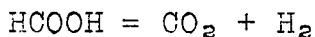
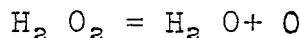
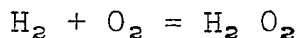
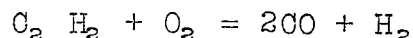


The number of intermediate products is one less than for methane.

The formula for the combustion of acetylene is



involving the following reactions.



Among the combustion products of ethane from the paraffin series, Evans ("The Chemistry of Combustion," The Chemical Age, Vol. V, 1921, p. 36) found formaldehyde and formic acid, showing that its combustion is similar to that of methane.

Since it is thus demonstrated that the gas oils, in burning, decompose into smaller molecules, chiefly ethylene and methane,

it is extremely probable that, along with the above-mentioned products, the final combustion products of the gas oils are also present. In truth these are only the last reactions. We do not know how many preceding reactions there are. Their number may be very large and it is to be hoped that chemical research will yield further information and lead to the complete explanation of the combustion of hydrocarbons in Diesel engines.

If ignition and combustion of the fuel oil in Diesel engines take place as stated above, the question may be raised as to how the combustion reactions can be controlled so that the final combustion products will be only CO_2 and H_2O . It is known that other products are also formed. We only need to remember the often smoky exhaust. If the exhaust gases are not clear, they must contain particles of soot, which are not pure carbon but contain molecularly complex hydrocarbons.* In such a case, the combustion has taken an undesirable course.

In order to avoid this, there must be no overheated parts in the combustion space above a certain temperature limit, which is about 600°C (1112°F) for aliphatic fuel oils. Liquid fuel drops must not come in contact with such hot parts, since a sort of "cracking" would occur, the result of which is a sooty exhaust.

*K. A. Hofmann and W. Freyer, "Wasserlösliche Kolloide aus künstlichen Kohlen," Ber. d. Deutschen Chem. Gesellschaft, Vol. 53 (1920), p. 2078.

Moreover, the question of the control of the combustion reactions in the Diesel engine leads to the important matter of mixture formation, which is a mechanical problem to a much greater degree than has hitherto been assumed.

Translation by Dwight M. Miner,
National Advisory Committee
for Aeronautics.

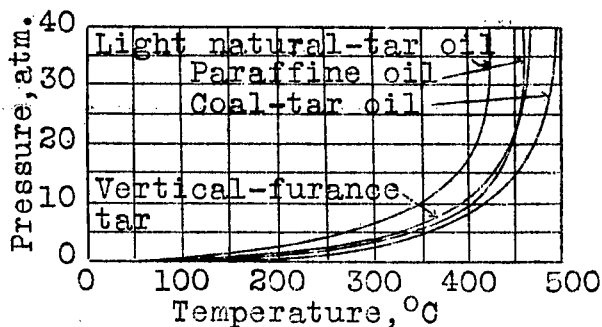


Fig.1 Pressure-temperature curves of fuels according to Wollers and Ehmcke.

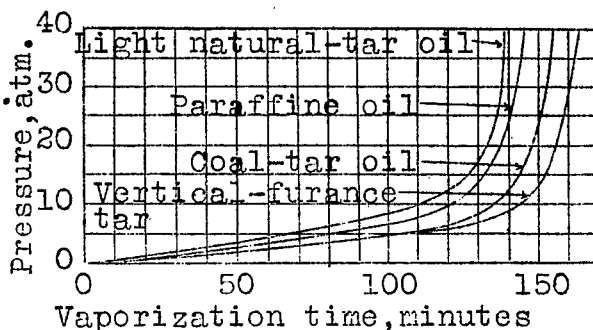


Fig.2 Pressure-time curves of fuels according to Wollers and Ehmcke.

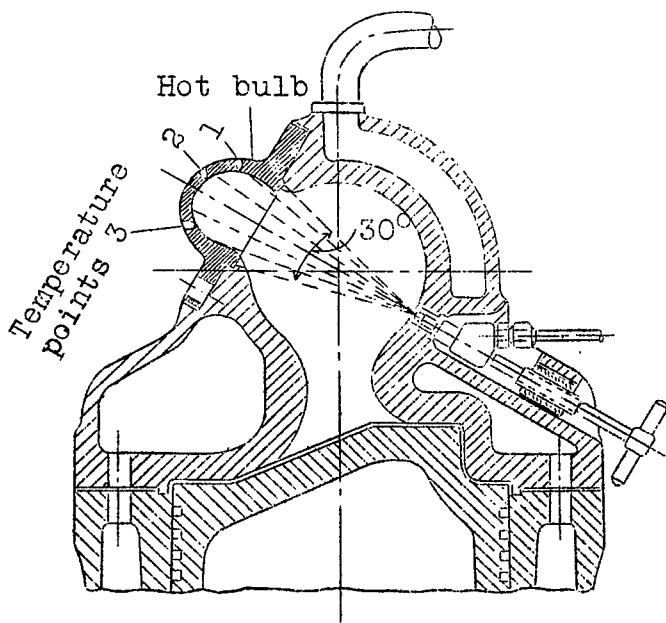


Fig.3 Temperature measurements on a 30 HP AEG medium-pressure engine.

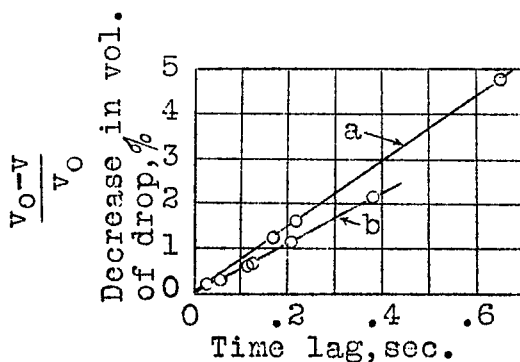


Fig.4 Decrease in volume of drop from vaporization plotted against time lag according to Neumann.

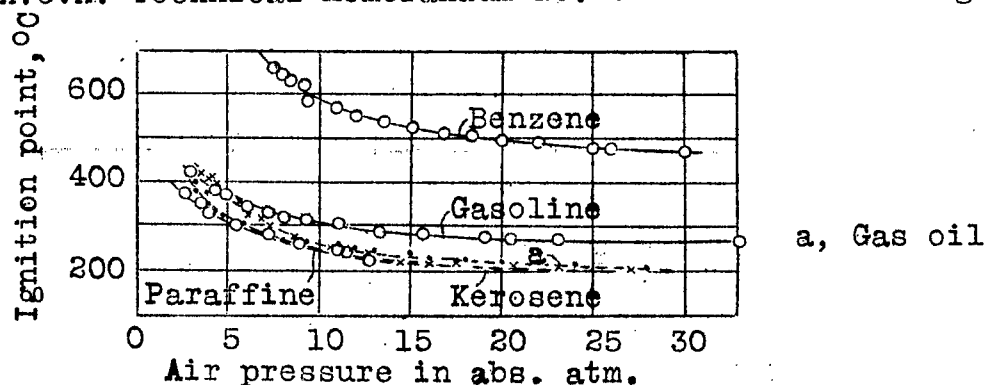
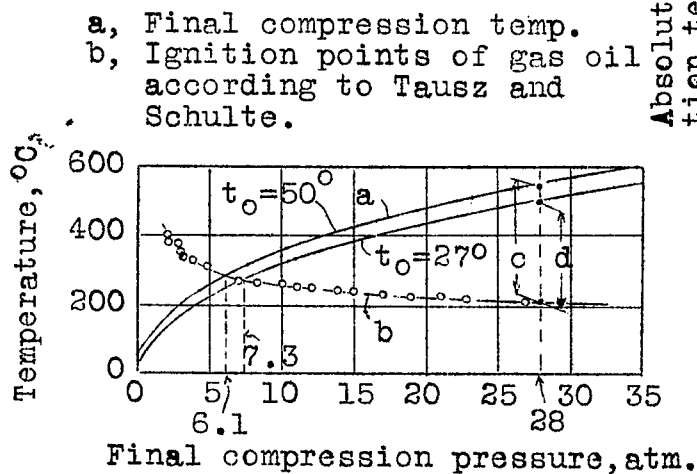


Fig.5 Lowering of ignition point of fuel oils with increasing air pressure according to Tausz and Schulte.



c, $\Delta t_{500} = 340^\circ$

d, $\Delta t_{270} = 293^\circ$

Fig.7 Final compression temperatures and ignition points for gas oil.

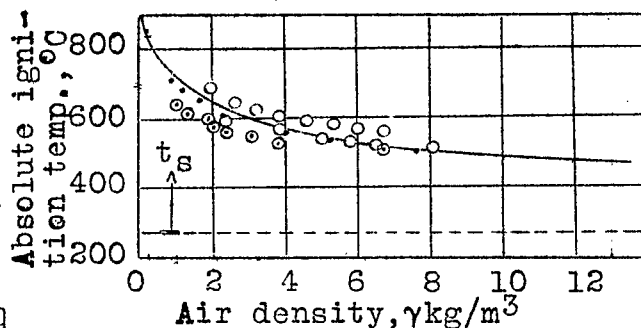


Fig.6 Ignition point plotted against air density according to Neumann.

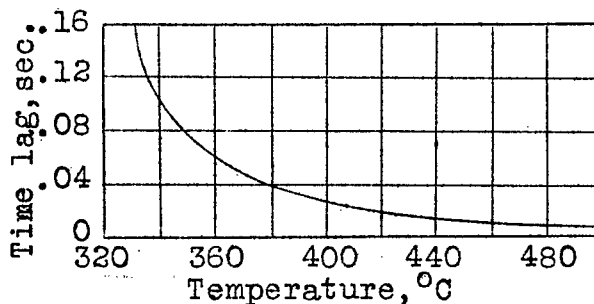


Fig.8 Time lag of shale oil in compressed air at 14 atm. according to Hawkes.

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